12 October 1999

English only

Commission on Population and Development
Thirty-third session
27-31 March 2000
Agenda item 2
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Report of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development at its inter-sessional meeting, held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 27 June 1999

A. Background

1. At its thirtieth session, the Commission on Population and Development had authorized the Bureau to hold inter-sessional meetings in preparation for its sessions on a yearly basis. In follow-up to this decision, an inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau was convened at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 27 June 1999. Previous Bureau meetings had been held in 1996 (Brussels), 1997 (Mexico City) and 1998 (Kuala Lumpur).

2. All members of the Bureau participated in the inter-sessional meeting. A complete list of participants is given in annex I to the present report.

B. Opening

3. The meeting was officially opened by Robert Cliquet, Honorary Director-General of the Population and Family Study Centre (Belgium) and Chairman of the Commission on Population and Development. Mr. Cliquet welcomed the members of the Bureau to the meeting and thanked the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat for its preparations in support of the meeting. He emphasized the usefulness of these annual meetings of the Bureau and reviewed the main issues that the Bureau would discuss during the meeting. An introductory statement was also made by Joseph Chamie, Director of the Population Division. Mr. Chamie welcomed the participants, and highlighted how these Bureau meetings had helped increase the productivity and efficiency of the sessions of the Commission. He also reviewed the background material that had been made available for the Bureau meeting.

C. Deliberations and recommendations

4. The deliberations of the Bureau were chaired by Mr. Cliquet. The provisional agenda was discussed at the start of the inter-sessional meeting and the agenda, as adopted, is presented in annex II to this report.

5. The items discussed at the inter-sessional meeting covered the proposed agenda and organization of work of the Commission on Population and Development at its thirty-third session, the work of the Commission on Population and Development in the next quinquennium; the options for an event to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on

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Population and Development;[1] meetings with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council and meetings among the chairs of functional commissions of the Council with specific responsibilities for the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences; the work programme of the Population Division; and other matters.

6. The recommendations of the Bureau on the above items are presented in annex III to this report. The Bureau reaffirmed the importance of its inter-sessional meetings in facilitating the work of the Commission.

Notes

1 *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

Annex I

List of participants

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Annex II

Agenda of the inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau of the Commission

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Commission on Population and Development:
   (a) Agenda and organization of work of the thirty-third session of the Commission;
   (b) Special themes and events of the Commission in 2002-2004;
   (c) Work programme of the Commission;
   (d) Other issues.
4. Other matters.
5. Conclusions.
6. Closing of the meeting.

Annex III

Recommendations of the Bureau

I. Recommendations concerning the provisional agenda, organization of work and working methods for the thirty-third session of the Commission

1. The Bureau recommended a revised provisional agenda for the thirty-third session of the Commission, as shown in appendix I to the present annex.

2. The Bureau recommended that two special discussants be designated to launch the debate on *World Population Monitoring 2000: Population, Gender and Development*. One discussant should focus on issues more relevant to the less developed countries and the other discussant on issues more germane to the more developed countries.

3. The Bureau recommended the convening of a panel to discuss the special theme of population, gender and development. The panel should be geographically balanced and include a chairman. The Bureau strongly urged the United Nations to allocate resources for convening the panel so that panellists of broad background and geographical representation could participate.

4. The Bureau discussed the organization of work for the thirty-third session of the Commission. With respect to item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda (see appendix I), the Bureau recommended that discussion of the World Population Monitoring report be separated from that of the operational issues of resources and programmes. In particular, the Bureau recommended that the order of work should be (a) introduction of the World Population Monitoring report, (b) presentation by two special discussants, (c) discussion by Member States, (d) presentation of documents on population programmes and resource flows and (e) discussion by Member States.

5. The Bureau recommended that interventions by delegations during the debate on national experiences concentrate on the special theme of the Commission. Oral presentations should be for a maximum of five minutes. Delegations wishing to prepare lengthier statements could make them available in writing; statements available in writing would be posted on the Population Division's Internet Web site.

6. The Bureau recommended that representatives of the Commission on Status of Women, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Statistical Commission be invited to make presentations at the Commission on Population and Development, in order to keep the Commission on Population and Development informed on interrelated activities undertaken by other Commissions, as well as on other five-year reviews of major conferences in the social and economic area.

7. The Bureau recommended that a working group be established at the thirty-third session of the Commission in order to discuss issues that might result in resolutions or decisions. The working group should begin its work on the second day of the session of the Commission. Among other issues, the Commission might wish to consider resolutions concerning the special theme of population, gender and development, special themes for the years 2002 and 2003, and options for an event marking the 10 years since the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Bureau recommended that the Population Division prepare initial drafts of resolutions and decisions in order to facilitate the work of the working group.

II. Recommendations concerning future sessions of the Commission

1. At the thirty-second session, the Commission decided that "Population, environment and development" should be the special theme for the Commission at its thirty-fourth session in 2001.

2. After further considering the work of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the topics that need further consideration, and the expected availability of census information, the Bureau recommended the following topics for the years 2002 and 2003:

2002: Reproductive rights and reproductive health

2003: Population and socio-economic differentials within and among countries

3. The Bureau recommended that, in the year 2004, the focus should be on the next quinquennial review and appraisal with no special theme for that year.

4. The Bureau considered possible options for an event in 2004 marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on

Population and Development namely: (a) a global conference; (b) a special session of the General Assembly; (c) a special session of the Economic and Social Council; (d) a special session of the Commission on Population and Development; and (e) other, for example, a technical session of experts. The Bureau emphasized that the event in 2004 should be innovative and take into consideration new issues and new actors in the field of population and development. The Bureau recommended that the Commission discuss the options for the 2004 event at its thirty-third session.

5. The Bureau recommended that representatives to the Commission should have the appropriate background in population and development. In addition, Governments should indicate the names of their representatives as early as possible in order to facilitate and enhance communication.

III. Recommendations concerning the working methods of the Bureau

1. The Bureau recommended that it should meet one day in advance of the opening of the thirty-third session of the Commission to review organizational and substantive issues, including draft resolutions and decisions prepared by the Secretariat (see recommendation 7 under sect. I above).

2. The Bureau requested the Director of the Population Division to conduct informal consultations with Member States, prior to the start of each session of the Commission, regarding the composition of the Bureau.

3. The Bureau took note of the minutes of its meeting with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council (see appendix II), emphasized the usefulness and the importance of such annual meetings to enhance coordination and information-sharing, and recommended that such meetings continue to be held at the time of the annual meetings of the Commission.

4. The Bureau took note of the meeting between the Chairman of the Commission on Population and Development and the Chairs of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women (see appendix III). The Bureau recommended that there be an annual meeting of the Chairs of the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Statistical Commission. The Bureau recommended that these meetings be convened at the time of the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. The Bureau recommended that funds be made available to facilitate the holding of these important annual meetings.

5. The Bureau recommended that the Commission empower the Chairman of future sessions of the Commission to invite friends of the Chair to inter-sessional meetings of the Bureau in order to ensure continuity and to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its work.

IV. Recommendations regarding the work programme of the Population Division

1. The Bureau reviewed the work programme of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and reiterated the view of the Commission on Population and Development as expressed at its thirty-second session, as follows: "It was the view of the Commission that the Population Division must have sufficient resources, and its work programme should be sufficiently flexible, to permit non-programmed work on unforeseen or emerging population issues and to incorporate ad hoc requests. It was also the view of the Commission that the monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, including reporting on the special themes of the Commission's multi-year work programme, should continue to be a key component of the Division's work programme. The Commission also expressed the view that the Division must have sufficient resources, and initiate the planning of activities, for the years beyond 2001, in order to ensure that it was properly positioned to undertake the second quinquennial review of the Programme of Action in the year 2004."

2. In this regard, the Bureau emphasized that the work of the Population Division should continue to be maintained and strengthened. The Bureau further emphasized that recruitment of well-trained and high-calibre staff, technically proficient in population issues, should be expedited and that bureaucratic constraints on the timely recruitment of such staff be removed. The Bureau recommended that the Director ensure the recruitment and retention of the highest-calibre professional staff to undertake the increasingly complex research requested from the Population Division.

3. The Bureau recommended the holding of technical meetings to shed light on key population concerns of the international community, including those related to the special themes of the Commission. The Bureau recommended that the Population Division seek funding for

collaboration with other institutions in order to hold these meetings.

4. The Bureau reiterated the importance of participation by Population Division staff in professional meetings in order to take maximum advantage of relevant research work being undertaken at universities, research centres and other institutions and to inform scholars of the research and initiatives undertaken at the Population Division.

Appendix I

Revised provisional agenda for the thirty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters:
   (a) Report of the inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau;
   (b) Agenda and organization of work.
3. Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development:
   (a) Special theme: population, gender and development;
   (b) Special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.
4. General debate on national experience in population matters: population, gender and development.
5. Work of the Commission on Population and Development in the next quinquennium.
6. Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population.
7. Provisional agenda for the thirty-fourth session of the Commission.
8. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirty-third session.

Appendix II

Joint meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council and the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development

(26 March 1999)

Participants

1. All the members of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development participated in the meeting. Participants from the Economic and Social Council were Ambassadors Valdivieso and Mangoaela plus representatives from the Permanent Missions of Italy and Indonesia to the United Nations.

International Conference on Population and Development: five-year review

2. Overall, the Commission on Population and Development will have taken up all the important issues related to the International Conference on Population and Development during the period 1995-2004. The Bureau of the Commission had made a major input into the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Conference, even though the preparatory committee, for the special session had its own Bureau. The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council expressed concern that the documentation before the preparatory committee on the five-year review reopened consideration of some of the Conference agreements and wondered whether a greater involvement of the Bureau of the Commission could have avoided this. It was noted that the Commission at its previous session had given guidance to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with respect to preparing the report concerned and that there had been continuing consultations with the Bureau of the preparatory committee.

3. Collaboration with other functional commissions had been extensive, the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development reported. While there was a deliberate effort to feed the results of that Commission into the work of other functional commissions, collaboration went beyond mutual reporting. A recent meeting of the Chairpersons of the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development had enabled a useful exchange of information on current and future activities. It was suggested that the next session of the Commission on Population and Development be held before that of the Commission on the Status of Women, so that the former's discussions on population, gender and development could serve as input into the latter's debate on the Beijing Platform for Action. Although information technologies also supported communication and faster dissemination of reports and outcomes, it was nevertheless considered that face-to-face meetings of the Commissions' Bureaux were still needed. The Bureaux agreed that it would be useful to hold a meeting of all the chairmen of the functional commissions during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

4. Collaboration among commissions and their secretariats could help to ensure that consistent and factually correct information on common topics was presented to the various commissions.

5. The priority themes of the Commission on Population and Development for the coming years had been decided, in full consideration of the work programmes of the Commissions for Social Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. However, while the Council had encouraged its functional commissions to adopt multi-year work programmes for the follow-up to conferences, the Commission on Population and Development was not able to decide on topics for 2002 and 2003 (the themes for 2000 and 2001 had been agreed on). The next inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau would discuss this issue.

Follow-up to the guidance of the Economic and Social Council

6. Many suggestions made by the Economic and Social Council in annex II to its resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998 had already been implemented, in particular its recommendations on the convening of inter-sessional meetings of the Bureau, on the organization of specific meetings by Governments, on gender mainstreaming and on documentation. At the same time, further progress was needed to ensure more interactive discussions, for which the Bureau of the Council advised that it might be useful to set up specific times for interactive dialogue and other specific times for national statements. Also, it was of concern that

the number of experts from capitals attending the sessions of the Commission was on the decline; this was linked to the increasingly political character of the topics discussed by the Commission (for example, gender, environment).

7. It was also noted that it had not been possible to elect the Commission's Bureau at the end of the preceding session, although the Economic and Social Council had recommended that this be done. This was partly because participants in a given session are usually experts on the topic examined during that session, and delegations often leave on the last day of the session. Inter-sessional work was all the more important to ensure continuity in the work of the Commission.

8. Finally, the Commission's Chair stated that the Commission was striving to make greater use of the findings contained in the basic documents before it, for example, on poverty, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and women.

The relation between the Commission and funds and programmes

9. The Commission on Population and Development had a particularly close relation with UNFPA. UNFPA was entrusted with operational aspects of the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, while the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs handled normative/analytical aspects. The normative work of the Commission (for example, on mortality, migration, ageing) had fed into the operational work of UNFPA. This relation was an example to be emulated by other functional commissions. The Commission also had a close relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the World Health Organization (WHO) and with the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Demographic Estimates and Projections, which was a unique instrument for promoting consistency within the United Nations system. There was also close cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (UNAIDS).

Possible follow-up

10. The issue was raised of a possible meeting of all the chairs of the functional commissions during the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

Appendix III

Summary report on the meeting of the Chairpersons of the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development

1. At the invitation of the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations, the Chairpersons of the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development held a meeting on 25 March 1999 to discuss possibilities for implementing Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/61 of 25 July 1997, aimed at strengthening the cooperation and exchange of information between the functional commissions.

2. The Chairpersons agreed upon the following suggestions:

(a) In addition to the existing systematic exchange of information and documentation, there should be a yearly meeting of the chairpersons of the functional commissions in order that they might consult upon and discuss the current and future activities of the commissions and coordinate their programmes;

(b) This yearly meeting of the chairpersons could be held during the yearly substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, so that the chairpersons could also provide a direct substantial input from the functional commissions into the deliberations of the Council;

(c) Within the framework of the International Year of Older Persons, a special event could be organized for the Consultative Group for the International Year, since all three Commissions, in particular the Commission on Population and Development, could have a substantial input in that context;

(d) As the Chairpersons of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development considered it desirable, the next session of the Commission on Population and Development should precede that of the Commission on the Status of Women.